

Members

Rep. David Niezgodski, Chairperson
Rep. Earl Harris
Rep. Charles Moseley
Rep. Don Lehe
Rep. Thomas Dermody
Rep. Ed Soliday
Sen. Sue Landske
Sen. Edward Charbonneau
Sen. Joseph Zakas
Sen. James Arnold
Sen. Frank Mrvan
Sen. Earline Rogers
Stanley Dobosz



NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

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Authority: P.L. 169-2006

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 1, 2009
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M. CDT
Meeting Place: Purdue Technology Center, 9800
Connecticut Drive
main conference room
Meeting City: Crown Point, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. David Niezgodski, Chairperson; Rep. Earl Harris; Rep. Thomas Dermody; Rep. Ed Soliday; Sen. Sue Landske; Sen. James Arnold; Sen. Earline Rogers; Stanley Dobosz.

Members Absent: Rep. Charles Moseley; Sen. Edward Charbonneau; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Rep. Don Lehe.

Call to Order

Representative David Niezgodski called the meeting to order at 10:18 a.m. CDT. He asked the Commission members to introduce themselves and proceeded to the day's agenda.

Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Representative Niezgodski called on **Bill Hanna**, Executive Director, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) to begin his presentation. See Attachment 1 for a printed version of Mr. Hanna's presentation.

The following is a short outline of Mr. Hanna's presentation:

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

- background:
 - creation of the RDA
 - RDA's five key areas of emphasis
 - RDA's key roles
 - RDA's funding sources
 - how is the RDA governed
- funding activity:
 - current impact of the RDA
 - RDA investments 2006 through 2009
 - RDA positive for Northwest Indiana
 - funding leverage 2006 through 2009
 - transportation issues.

There were some comments and questions from members about the cumulative RDA project funding figures for 2006-2009. Of the \$132.1 million the RDA has expended in project funding since 2006, \$79.4 million has gone to Lake Shore redevelopment, approximately four times the amount supplied to the Gary Airport (\$20 M) or the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) (\$17.5 M). See Attachment 1. **Representative Ed Soliday** commented that the Lake Shore redevelopment project funding is highly leveraged in the sense that it draws a significant amount of additional federal funding. Mr. Hanna confirmed this. But **Senator Earline Rogers** expressed concern about the amount of Lake Shore Redevelopment expenditures relative to the other projects that have been funded. She wanted to know whether Lake Shore redevelopment funding is crowding out funding for transportation projects. Mr. Hanna explained that the Lake Shore Redevelopment funding levels are a function of project timing and do not reflect a preference for Lake Shore redevelopment over transportation projects. He added that the RDA's bonding authority has not yet been tapped and the RDA remains strongly committed to transportation.

Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District

Jerry Hanas, General Manager, NICTD, then gave the NICTD presentation. See Attachment 2 for a printed version of Mr. Hanas' presentation.

The following is a short outline of Mr. Hanas' presentation:

- background:
 - Northern Indiana Transportation Commuter District (map)
 - NICTD's existing service
 - physical assets
 - change in NICTD ridership 1977-2008
 - ridership change: year-to-date
- five-year capital plan:
 - investment objectives
 - capital investment
 - centralized train control
 - catenary modernization
 - District map: signal and catenary phasing
 - catenary phase 2
 - modernization program, progress and funding requirements
 - additional capital investment
 - high level boarding
 - ticket vending machines
 - capacity enhancements
 - realignments
 - Metra capacity issues

- West Lake corridor
- proposed South Bend realignment
- proposed Michigan City realignment.

Senator Jim Arnold had a few questions about the improvements in Michigan City. Specifically, he wanted to know whether it was possible to realign the tracks to the north of the city, and if not, why proponents of this idea continue advocating it. Mr. Hanas explained that there is a proposal to make a joint NICTD-Amtrak corridor north of the city. But, he pointed out, even Amtrak acknowledges that this idea would require a long bridge grade to implement (1300 feet on each side). This fact adds a significant amount of cost and therefore NICTD opposes the idea. NICTD, on the other hand, prefers a less complex realignment through city, an idea that has the support of the Michigan City Council, according to Mr. Hanas. The reason that the north side realignment idea continues to be raised, Mr. Hanas elaborated, is that there is a group pushing north side development.

Representative Tom Dermody asked about NICTD's position on the new Regional Transportation District (Northern Indiana Regional Transportation District). See IC 8-24 (as added by HEA 1001 (ss) (P.L. 182-2009), SECTION 282). Mr. Hanas said NICTD is still digesting the new statute and expects to come out with a position in September.

Representative Soliday asked about NICTD's position on transit-oriented development (TOD). Mr. Hanas said that he proposed a TOD position to the NICTD Board at its July meeting. The proposal was tabled until September. However, Mr. Hanas indicated that he hopes NICTD will adopt a new TOD policy in September.

Regional Bus Authority

Finally, Representative Niezgodski asked **Tim Brown**, Executive Director, Regional Bus Authority (RBA), to give his presentation. See Attachment 3 for a printed version of Mr. Brown's presentation.

The following is a short outline of Mr. Brown's presentation:

- short historical timeline of bus transit in Northwest Indiana
- current operations and operations map
- mass transit ridership 2002 through 2008
- selected operating data 2006 through 2008
- RBA history
- recent objectives and TranSystem study highlights
- universal versus regional operators
- consolidation plan for fixed routes
- current conditions of fixed route systems
- RBA use of ARRA, CMAQ, JARC and New Freedom funds.

The main discussion during Mr. Brown's presentation brought out one of the motivations for the Northern Indiana Regional Transportation District legislation, cited above. Representative Soliday asked Mr. Brown how long the three bus services (in Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago) can last without additional funds. Mr. Brown replied that he thought the Gary Public Transportation Corporation and Hammond Transit would last about one to two years; Mr. Brown did not have an estimate for East Chicago Transit. Representative Soliday then commented that the point of the Northern Indiana Regional Transportation District legislation is to raise the money to keep these systems going; if the region waits until Spring 2010 to create the District, the systems are in danger of folding; and if they fold, the assets will be distributed in liquidation. Mr. Brown added that it would then cost at least twice as much to restart the failed systems. Representative Dermody asked Mr. Brown whether he was saying that if the region waits until

May 2010 to create the District, these systems will fail. Mr. Brown reiterated his previous estimate of the systems' financial condition.

Senator Rogers asked about the total cost to operate these systems. Mr. Brown thought that \$5 M annually is the bare minimum; and that amount leverages state and federal dollars. Senator Rogers then brought Mr. Hanna into the discussion. She asked him whether the RDA is preparing to contribute financial assistance, if necessary. Mr. Hanna said that the RDA is very aware of the situation and very concerned. But, he observed, any assistance to the bus services would come at the expense of other projects. Senator Rogers asked Mr. Hanna whether one-time funding is possible. Mr. Hanna replied that the RDA has made one-time distributions for operations in the past and would entertain a one-time funding request for operations.

Adjournment; Next Meeting Date

Representative Niezgodski remarked that the issues concerning the Northern Indiana Regional Transportation District legislation, cited above, deserve a full airing and he expects to schedule the topic at a future meeting of the Commission.

Representative Niezgodski set the next meeting date of the Commission for Thursday September 24, 2009, at a location to be announced. He also set a tentative date of Tuesday October 13 for the Commission's third meeting.

Representative Niezgodski thanked Bill Hanna and the staff of the RDA for their gracious assistance in hosting the meeting and declared the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

The following attachments were distributed to the Commission, but were not discussed during the meeting:

- Attachment 4: South Shore Line -- Closed Some Weekends for Construction (NICTD)
- Attachment 5: Introducing EasyGo (brochure) (RBA)
- Attachment 6: Introducing EasyGo (map) (RBA)
- Attachment 7: Northwest Indiana Transit Consolidation Plan (RBA)